

Labour Unions and the Open Source
Movement Alliance

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Application of F.I.S.T.

This paper is a brief overview of the applications of the FIST model by the Labour Movement in close co-ordination with the Open Source Movement (and the Free Software Foundation.) Both groups are attempting to take on “the man”, as it were. The term, “the man,” is used to refer to multinational corporations, and the “changes washing tsunami-like over working men and women.”

Futuristics

In labour unions, an incessant amount of forward looking must be done to attempt to map every move that the corporation is bound to make. The same must be done in the informatics software and hardware trends. The labour movement must maintain contact with and in step with the commercial sectors as cheaply as is possible. It must be able to harness the power of unmanned innovative software. This oft means custom written or easily customisable software. Most importantly, a cheap way of information exchange.

It was not more than three years ago, that Linux was just a *hackers* operating system. Now IBM, Intel, Apple, Oracle, and just about every big player on the field (except Microsoft, for obvious reasons) are using Linux in their low end computer servers, or porting their software applications to Linux. Additionally, millions of dollars have been poured into the software development for Linux applications.

For example, the Apache web server is in use by over 70% of the Internet communities. Everyone from the local Internet service providers (ISP's) to (ironically enough) Microsoft owned, Hotmail.Com. Other software vendors like Corel (whom provide the Corel Office Suite, a Canadian based company) is pouring money into the open source project WINE. WINE is an application programming interface (API.) An API is a set of basic functions that do very menial tasks at the low level in the computer system. In this way, the programmer can concentrate on features in his program, and leave the low level programming to this library of functions which he may call upon at will.

This particular API (the WINE API) is a windows program emulator. It allows people whom have written programs to exclusively run on Windows, with little effort, port the programs to Linux and compile. Corel poured money into the project so that it could port it's Office suite from Microsoft

Windows to Linux without rewriting the Windows version of the office suite.

Innovation

Most important for labour unions, if they are to compete against big brother is to “be the first in line” when new software models, and innovative hardware comes along. Very much like Linux taking the commercial market by storm, another product may come along and cause the market to salivate. Labour unions must be on the other side of that fence. They must be ready to proudly say, “we told you so!”

To go along with this “we told you so” mentality, the labour movement must also be receptive to external ideas. The need for talented staffers to continuously explore and crawl the Internet for new software products which can be downloaded, installed, tested, and redistributed *for free* with labour movements across the globe, is imperative. The existence of many central points of information for the free software foundation and open source movement already exist (see the list of references at the end of this document.) It’s just a matter of scanning the page for the daily announcement of new products to be released on a daily basis. You will oft find a gem, to fulfil a need in your cyber office.

The most attractive feature of the Free Software Foundation (and by default, Linux) is the fact that it’s *free*. This allows for several things to occur. Firstly, it remove the excuse for wasting money to “check out” new and innovative software products. The only wasting that happens (if a software product fails to meet expectations during testing) is the effort it took for this talented staffer to investigate it. Secondly, it means that the cyber unions can remain on the bleeding edge of software technology while minimising downtime, and crashes.

Services

The promotion of ties to individuals throughout the open source movement is not that difficult. There are several aids to this issue. Many of the people involved in contributing to open source software products are doing out of pure love for the act of coding. There are usually no ulterior motives (eg: money.) So for the most part, you’ll be able to find someone in the world, literally the world, who will work for (at the very least pizza and beer.)

Since the software programmer for the open source movement is doing this out of pure love for the act of coding (and additionally helping a non-profit organisation) you might avoid some of the aggravation of new systems implementation. For example, missing feature-sets, or convoluted new feature-sets. Close connection might be maintained between the programmers and the labour union via the Internet. In the forum of the world, you will be able to have the eyes of the millions of critics whom will look at the source code and find (and more oft than not fix) bugs *before* the software is implemented. The Open Source Software motto: "Given enough eyes, all bugs are shallow."

Free software will also allow free software upgrades, and downloads. No more headaches from having to upgrade your office suite (spending the *so-called reduced* prices of "upgrades", which mean that you spend \$300 USD versus \$600 USD for Microsoft Office 2000.) Furthermore, you can "reduce, reuse and recycle" old hardware. Having rank-filers forming close ties with co-workers in the IT departments of their companies, will allow for the older computers that corporations throw out (because it's too slow to run buggy, bloated, resource intensive commercial software like Windows 2000) to be donated to their local unions. Operating systems like Linux and Free-BSD, or Open-BSD usually run *very* quickly and efficiently on even a 486, or Pentium 75 with as little as 8 MB of RAM. The standard to run the average computer workstation running Windows NT, Windows 98, or Windows 2000 is a Pentium - 200 with *at least* 64 MB of RAM.

Additionally, Linux is not your old style cryptic UNIX system anymore. In fact, daily, more and more programs are being released that help to deal with the casual user. In effect, attempting to combine the best of both worlds: ease of use and stability! Linux distributors package the operating system with other pieces of software to make living in Linux-World easier. These combined software packages are called distributions. The two major Linux distributors, SuSE Linux and Red Hat Linux, make Linux installing so easy, that all you have to do is pop in the first CD, and boot your computer. It immediately goes into a graphical user interface, and you quickly forget that you are using a product that was developed for the users, by the users!

Support can also be done by other cyber unions over the Internet! In effect, if one labour union has a tech-ie, he can tele-commute to his neighbouring cyber union's computer and fix whatever problems they might have with it. This is very difficult to be done under other operating systems, because most of the key functions of the computer can all be accessed via the

command-line, or remote administration programs!

Rank-filers and the administration would be able to listen and view upto the minute deliberations through Apple's Open Source Streaming Server called Darwin (once again, free). Free Internet telephony programs exist that allow for two way communications through the Internet, for the labour movement. Available, for free, is mailing list software, bulletin board software; you can even have a free virtual paperless office through a software product currently being developed by the software division of Northern Systems and Administration, a small Philadelphia based support group.

Traditions

Most important part of upholding traditions is to get through to the younger generation. This means disseminating throughout the Internet interrelated web-sites on the history of the labour movement! All of this, however, takes money. The best application of the free software movement is in non-profit organisations and cash-strapped organisations (eg: small businesses) since one doesn't have to pay for additional expensive software licenses.

Cyber-space calendars, schedules, Lightweight Directory Access Protocol servers (to maintain indexed, searchable lists of rank-filer's names, addresses, &c.) edutainment resources (via the implementation of the open source Darwin streaming servers) adds a lot to a web-site. It makes the web-site, and the union's Internet presence bold! This draws the attention of lower schoolers and the so-called generation-X'ers.

Through the model listed above, focused on the open source software movement, will make for a wonderful alliance between the free software foundation and the labour movement!

Internet Resources

1. <http://www.slashdot.org>: Slashdot (whose motto is “News for Nerds”) is the ideal place to find breaking news on issues regarding censorship, hardware and software breakthroughs &c.
2. <http://www.freshmeat.net>: Freshmeat.Net is a web-site updated hourly on new software products released by computer hackers around the world. This includes software upgrades. It’s also a searchable directory for most of the software that can be found to run on Linux. It’s all free!
3. <http://www.Linux.org> and <http://www.Linux.com>: Linux.Org is the original Linux web-site for general information about Linux. Linux.Com is a recently added web-site which goes in depth about Linux, including documentation, tips and tricks, development, &c.
4. <http://www.transmeta.com/mobile/>: Transmeta Going Mobile. This site is the demonstration of the beginning of the new millennium wearables. Shown are the new “web-pads” from Transmeta, who released their new revolutionary chip earlier this year. Employed by Transmeta is Linus Torvaldes, creator of the popular Linux Operating System.